



How to Have a Happy New Year

The Final Sermon of 2020

[Psalm 1](#)

Pastor Matt Friend – December 27, 2020
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Way down deep, we all desire to be happy...

“Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.” **–Aristotle**

“Every man, whatever his condition, desires to be happy.” **–Augustine**

“All people seek happiness. This is without exception.” **–Blaise Pascal**

“It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy, as it is for the fire to burn.” **–Thomas Manton**

“Happiness is what all mankind want to obtain—the desire for it is deeply planted in the human heart.” **–J. C. Ryle**

“We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.” **–Anne Frank**

Unfortunately, we’re faced with two common misconceptions about happiness:

1. “It’s sinful or selfish to want to be happy.”
 - No. We don’t seek happiness because we’re sinners, but because we’re humans. Long before sin entered the world, God wired His image-bearers with a desire for happiness. In other words, the Fall didn’t generate the human longing for happiness—it derailed and misdirected it.
2. “God didn’t call you to be happy; He called you to be holy.”
 - I believe the intent behind this statement is noble, but should be said in a much clearer way. As it is, the statement is as illogical as, “God didn’t call you to be merciful; he called you to be forgiving.”

So, what is happiness and how do we obtain it?

*[Psalm 1](#) has the answer!



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Today's big Idea: **Meditating on the Bible is the key to a happy new year.**

Psalm 1 compares two types of people: the righteous and the ungodly. This comparison can be seen in the way Psalm 1 is put together. Like all the others, Psalm 1 is a poem. This particular poem is written like a mirror, where the top 3 verses mirror (as the exact opposite of) the bottom 3 verses. Think of Psalm 1 like a piece of paper folded over in half from top to bottom. The top 3 verses speak of the righteous and the bottom three verses speak of the ungodly.

What does “blessed” mean in [verse 1](#)?

This Hebrew word refers not to superficial or circumstantial happiness. It's not plastic, fake happiness that pretends that pain doesn't exist. It's not the “power of positive thinking” that tells you to look on the sunny side of life. This isn't a “name-it-and-claim-it” happiness or a prosperity gospel promising health, wealth, and success if you can muster up enough faith. This isn't a “don't worry, be happy” kind of happiness that ignores human suffering. (We know from the Scriptures that there's a time to laugh and a time to cry. Even Jesus wept. He especially agonized on the cross!)

Instead, this word “blessed” refers to deep happiness that comes from finding our security in God—in the best of times and in the worst of times. It refers to fulfillment and spiritual satisfaction. We could also translate verse 1 as *flourishing*: “Flourishing is the one who...”

This happiness/blessedness is based on facts. What facts? See [verse 2](#).

How do we become practically righteous people? By meditating on God's Word. The “secret” ingredient to growing as a Christian is [meditating on God's Word](#).

Meditating on the Bible is the key to a happy new year.



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What is meditation? The word means, “To deliberate, contemplate, reflect, muse, repeat over and over again to one’s self.”

What happens when we meditate often on God’s Word? See [verse 3](#).

God uses a tree to describe the man or woman who delights in Gods’ Word and draws spiritual nourishment from it, like a tree draws nourishment from a stream. Through meditation, we can grow, even in times of drought. Our leaf can stay green even in the heat.

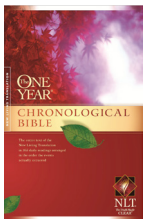
Again, this happiness isn’t superficial. It’s not exempt from pain, grief, death, depression, or even anxiety. We live in a fallen world where we will struggle with these things to varying degrees until we meet Jesus. But meditating on God’s word gives us an eternal outlook, opposite of the temporary, worldly outlook of the ungodly. See [verses 4-6](#).

Dale Carnegie said it best, “Two men looked out from prison bars; one saw mud, the other saw stars.” In this short quip, the circumstances of the two men were identical. They were in the same prison behind the same bars. What was the difference? Their perspective/meditation!

Today’s next step: **Read and meditate on the Bible in 2021.**

Resource Recommendation:

A One Year Chronological Bible reading plan:



[The One Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan](#)



[The One Year Chronological Online Bible Reading Plan](#)